

10 Questions With...

Cemetery Superintendent Tricia Pappas

By JOSH CUTLER

This is the first in an occasional series of interviews with Duxbury town officials. Tricia Pappas is Duxbury's superintendent of cemeteries. She works in the Mayflower Cemetery office and oversees the town's four cemeteries: Mayflower, Standish, Ashdod and Dingley.

1) Who are some well-known people buried in Duxbury? Jerry Williams, the talk show host; Ezra Weston, the shipping magnate; Ruth Wakefield of toll-house cookie fame. John Alden, Priscilla Alden, Myles Standish are buried in the Standish cemetery. Of course I think everyone who is buried here is famous in their own right.

2) How did you get to be the cemetery superintendent? I've been in Duxbury nine years. I started as an assistant to the superintendent and then I was promoted to superintendent three years ago. Before that I worked in a funeral home in Brockton for three years as an office manager.



Cemetery Superintendent Tricia Pappas in her office at the Mayflower Cemetery.

3) What does it cost to be buried or cremated? For Duxbury residents it is \$600 per grave, or \$1,100 for non-residents. A two-space cremation lot is \$500 for Duxbury residents, \$700 for non-residents. What you are purchasing is burial rights for yourself and your family for a specific area, be it a cremation lot, a single grave, two graves and all of all the way up....The actual cost to get cremated is \$230. That's our fee. And then there is a \$75 charge for the medical examiner. They have to view the body before it is cremated.

4) How hot does it get in the crematory? Very hot. It has to reach an internal temperature of least 1,600 degrees Fahrenheit. It can go as high as 2,000 degrees. The chamber is encased in four-inch thick brick. You could stand next to it and feel some of the heat but it is not going to burn you....When it comes up at Town Meeting to 'reline the retort' that is what that's for. Every certain number of years you need to change that.

5) Why does smoke come out of the crematorium chimney sometimes? If the body bag is too thick that can cause smoke. It also depends on the person's body weight. It can also happen if someone is larger...Body fat is more flammable.

6) How many cremations are there per month on average? We average anywhere from 155 to 280 cremations per month. Duxbury's is the largest in the state of Massachusetts. We have four cremation chambers side by side.

7) What happens when we run out cemetery space? That won't happen for hundreds of years. We have 35 acres developed now. There's

another 20 acres or so that could be developed. We should have at least 300 years worth of burial space. It goes way back on Mayflower Street.

8) Do you ever watch the show "Six Feet Under" on HBO? I watched a couple episodes. I didn't care for it. It was too dark. I did enjoy the show "Family Plots" that was on A&E a couple years ago.

9) How do people react when you tell them you run a cemetery? People look at me different. It's a male-dominated field, so being female, people find that interesting. Some people think it is morbid. I look at it as part of history.

10) Who is Dingley and where is the Dingley cemetery? The Dingley Cemetery is on West Street. It's a little over an acre in size and has been closed for a long time. Some of the earliest burials there were Jacob and Hannah Dingley so it must be named for one of them. The last person buried there was in 1892.

For more information about the Cemetery Department or to make an appointment to talk about burial plots call Tricia Pappas at 781- 934-5261.